

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 (ISO) W
-----002295 081907Z /45

O 081610Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7172
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 06463

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:JBOR, EAID, JO, US IS
SUBJECT: MAQARIN DAM NEXT STEPS - DISCUSSIONS
WITH GOJ OFFICIALS

SUMMARY: IN MEETING WITH GOJ OFFICIALS (OMAR
ABDULLAH AND HANNA ODEH) WE TOOK ONE STEP
FORWARD AND ONE STEP BACK ON WATER RIGHTS ISSUES.
GOJ POSITION ON MAQARIN DAM WATER AVAILABILITY
FOR YARMOUK TRIANGLE APPEARS TO HAVE HARDENED
SOMEWHAT WHILE ITS POSITION ON WEST BANK STUDY
POSSIBLY IN PARALLEL WITH QUOTE CONGRESSIONALLY
SUPPORTED UNQUOTE POST-PEACE REGIONAL COOPERATION
EXERCISE EASED UP WITH GOJ WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE
AS APPROPRIATE IN SUCH A STUDY. TAUBENBLATT WILL
BRIEF EMBASSY TEL AVIV ON AMMAN DISCUSSIONS.
IN MEETING WITH ISRAELIS, EMBASSY AND TAUBENBLATT
AGREE THAT IT BEST NOT TO RAISE WEST BANK STUDY
UNTIL WE HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT WITH GOJ ON SCOPE
OF WEST BANK STUDY. IN THE MEANTIME, WE SEE NO
PROBLEM IN TAUBENBLATT BRIEFING GOI OFFICIALS ON
RECENT TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON MAQARIN DAM PROJECT
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AND TO TRY ASCERTAIN ANY CHANGES IN ISRAELI ATTITUDE
ON MAQARIN IN VIEW OF RECENT MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS.
ALSO, AT GOJ REQUEST TAUBENBLATT WILL CONVEY PRESENT
GOJ CONCERN ON WATER AVAILABILITY, PARTICULARLY AS
AFFECTED BY POSSIBLE SYRIAN USES IN UPPER YARMOUK
REACHES. END SUMMARY.

1. ON AUGUST 6, IN TWO MEETINGS TAUBENBLATT AND HARRELL MET WITH OMAR ABDULLAH, PRESIDENT, JORDAN VALLEY AUTHORITY (JVA), AND HANNA ODEH, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL (NPC) TO DISCUSS CURRENT STATUS OUTSTANDING RIPARIAN RIGHTS ISSUES RELATED TO MAQARIN DAM PROJECT. TAUBENBLATT INDICATED THAT HE PLANNED TO VISIT ISRAEL LATER THIS WEEK AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REVIEW CURRENT STATUS OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN GOJ AND GOI. HE MENTIONED THREE UNRESOLVED ISSUES, I.E., YARMOUK RIVER WATER AVAILABILITY/FLOW TO YARMOUK TRIANGLE, WEST BANK STUDY, AND DIVERSION WEIR CONSTRUCTION.

2. WATER AVAILABILITY/FLOW: TAUBENBLATT REVIEWED ISRAELI POSITION AS DISCUSSED IN JERUSALEM MEETING LAST NOVEMBER -- THAT GOI WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT 25 MCM AVAILABILITY FOR YARMOUK TRIANGLE AND WOULD AGREE TO DEFER IN CONJUNCTION WITH MAQARIN STAGE III (I.E., BUILDING OF SECOND DAM DOWNSTREAM) ADDITIONAL WATER AVAILABILITY ABOVE 25 MCM (I.E., UP TO 40 MCM). TAUBENBLATT ASKED WHETHER THE GOJ ACCEPTED THE ISRAELI APPROACH. ABDULLAH STATED THAT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE GOI PROPOSAL AND AT THIS TIME COULD ONLY GUARANTEE 17 MCM FROM MAQARIN DAM STAGE II WITH THE REMAINDER, I.E., 8 MCM TO BE MADE AVAILABLE AT A NEXT STAGE FROM DOWNSTREAM FLOWS, WHICH IN ANY EVENT ISRAEL IS CONFIDENTIAL

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CAPTURING UNTIL DOWNSTREAM DAM IS CONSTRUCTED. IN COMMENTING, TAUBENBLATT NOTED THAT GOJ POSITION HAS CHANGED FROM NOVEMBER 1977 UNDERSTANDING WHEN GOJ AGREED TO MAKE 247MCM AVAILABLE FROM MAQARIN STAGE II. TAUBENBLATT ASKED WHETHER CHANGE IN GOJ POSITION CAME ABOUT AS RESULT OF ISRAELI REQUEST TO NEGOTIATE WATER AVAILABILITY ABOVE 25 MCM IN CONJUNCTION WITH STAGE III PLAN. ABDULLAH DID NOT COMMENT DIRECTLY TO QUESTION, BUT GAVE TWO REASONS FOR GOJ POSITION: 1) GOJ CONCERN ABOUT SYRIAN WATER USES IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE YARMOUK RIVER WHICH MAY REDUCE FLOW INTO THE YARMOUK DAM RESERVOIR, AND 2) THAT DATA MADE AVAILABLE BY ISRAEL (TABLE ONE ON YARMOUK TRIANGLE USES) ONLY SHOWS PRESENT CONSUMPTION OF YARMOUK RIVER IN YARMOUK TRIANGLE OF 18.1 MCM, THAT HE DID NOT FEEL OBLIGATED TO MAKE MORE THAN 17 MCM WATER AVAILABLE. TAUBENBLATT MENTIONED THE JOHNSTON PLAN AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 25 MCM FIGURE, TO WHICH ABDULLAH RESPONDED THAT HE ACCEPTS THE 25 MCM TOTAL -- BUT THE 17 MCM NOW, AND 8 MCM LATER. ABDULLAH AND ODEH ASKED THAT GOJ CONCERN ABOUT WATER AVAILABILITY BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE SYRIAN WATER TAKE-OFF BE CONVEYED

TO ISRAELIS. TAUBENBLATT WILL DO SO IN GENERAL TERMS,
BUT WILL NOT MENTION SPECIFIC FIGURES OF 17 MCM NOW
AND 8 MCM LATER.

3. WEST BANK STUDY: TAUBENBLATT ASKED WHETHER THE
GOJ HAD ANY FURTHER THOUGHTS ON BOTH SCOPE AND THE
APPROACH WITH RESPECT TO THE WEST BANK STUDY, AND
ABDULLAH FIRMLY RESPONDED THAT THE GOJ CANNOT

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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A STUDY UNTIL A MIDDLE EAST
POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OCCURS. TAUBENBLATT THEN ASKED
IF THE GOJ COULD ACCEPT A STUDY WHICH WOULD BE
PREPARED AND FINANCED BY THE U.S. HE FURTHER
EXPLAINED THAT AT THE REQUEST OF THE U.S. CONGRESS
THAT AID WAS UNDERTAKING A NUMBER OF STUDIES RELATED
TO POST-PEACE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND THAT A WEST BANK
WATER SOURCE/USE STUDY CLEARLY FITS INTO THAT CONTEXT.
ABDULLAH AND ODEH SAID THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION
TO THE U.S. TAKING ON SUCH A STUDY AND NOTED THAT THEY
WOULD BE WILLING TO COOPERATE AS APPROPRIATE. THE
GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF THE STUDY WAS DISCUSSED, WITH
ABDULLAH PREFERRING A WEST GHOR AND ZHOR STUDY AS
OPPOSED TO A BROADER WEST BANK WATERSHED. HOWEVER,
ABDULLAH AND ODEH RECOGNIZED THE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE
OF A BROADER STUDY TO DEAL WITH MUNICIPAL AND INDUSTRIAL
REQUIREMENTS IN THE WEST BANK WATERSHED, OVER-ALL
BASED NOT ONLY ON YARMOUK WATER BUT ON WEST BANK
GROUNDWATER AND FLOWS FROM LAKE TIBERIAS. COMMENT:

SINCE THIS WILL BE A U.S. STUDY, UNLESS CROWN
PRINCE HASSAN UPON HIS RETURN TO JORDAN SHOULD
OVERRULE ODEH AND ABDULLAH, WE DO NOT THINK THAT
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THE GOJ WOULD OBJECT TO A BROADER GEOGRAPHICAL
COVERAGE BEYOND WEST GHOR AND ZHOR, I.E., THE
ENTIRE WEST BANK WATERSHED. THEY ALSO INDICATED
THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF HARZA WERE
SELECTED AS THE CONTRACTOR FOR SUCH A U.S.-SPONSORED
WEST BANK STUDY. TAUBENBLATT AGREED TO PREPARE
NEW SCOPE OF WORK FOR GOJ REVIEW. WE BELIEVE GOJ
IS IN A POSITION ITSELF TO PROVIDE DATA
ON EQUIVALENT EAST BANK NEEDS IF THAT BECOMES
NECESSARY.

4. DIVERSION WEIR VS DROP INLET: ABDULLAH STATED THAT
HE STILL PREFERS THE DIVERSION WEIR APPROACH BECAUSE
OF ITS ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL SUPERIORITY BUT
THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD HAVE TO AGREE . IN
DISCUSSING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WEIR AND THE
NEED FOR ACCESS TO THE ISRAELI OCCUPIED BANK OF
THE YARMOUK, ABDULLAH SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK
THAT THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR WOULD NEED ACCESS
TO ISRAELI OCCUPIED TERRITORY SINCE THE WEIR WOULD
BE CONSTRUCTED DURING THE DRY SUMMER MONTHS WHEN THE
YARMOUK RIVER IS SHALLOW. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT SURE
THAT ABDULLAH IS CORRECT IN THIS CONCLUSION, AND
WE PLAN TO CHECK THIS MATTER WITH HARZA (CHICAGO).
ABDULLAH FELT THAT IN RESPONSE TO THE GOI REQUEST
FOR TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE WEIR THAT HARZA AS
THE A AND E WOULD BE PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF DEALING
WITH ANY TECHNICAL OR DESIGN PROBLEMS AND COORDINATE
SUCH MATTERS WITH ISRAELI AND JORDANIAN TECHNICIANS.
TAUBENBLATT ASKED WHETHER THE JORDANIAN-ISRAELI
MIXED ARMISTICE COMMISSION (MAC) COULD BE USED
AS A VEHICLE TO PERMIT TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS BY
ISRAEL AND JORDAN ON THE WEIR CONSTRUCTION.
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ABDULLAH'S RESPONSE WAS NEGATIVE AND HE REAFFIRMED
THAT THE USE OF HARZA AS A COORDINATING INTERMEDIARY
ON THE WEIR WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.

5. ADDITIONAL ISRAELI TECHNICAL INFORMATION:
IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY TAUBENBLATT, ABDULLAH

INDICATED THAT, IF POSSIBLE, HE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN AGRICULTURAL AND WATER USE DATA FROM THE ISRAELIS ON THE AREA ALONG THE DEAD SEA CONTIGUOUS TO WADI ARABA. IN THIS REGARD, ABDULLAH ASKED FOR THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION: 1) CROPPING PATTERNS, 2) WATER USES, AND 3) WATER AVAILABILITIES/SOURCE. TAUBENBLATT SAID HE WOULD TRY TO OBTAIN SUCH DATA FROM THE ISRAELIS DURING HIS VISIT THERE.

6. APPRECIATE AID/GC ASSESSMENT OF IMPLICATIONS OF LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS ON MAQARIN DAM PROJECT IN RELATION TO SECTION 499(B) (&) (B) AND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZATION BILL. HOWEVER, BEFORE CONSIDERING QUESTION OF INFORMING GOJ, EMBASSY DESIRES FULLY COORDINATED DEPARTMENT/AID OPINION (C.F. TAUBENBLATT/MULLEN MEMORANDUM DATED JULY 27) TO PERMIT FULL DISCUSSION OF LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS AND WAYS OF DEALING WITH LEGISLATIVE ISSUES WITH GOJ. WE EXPECT THAT GOJ WILL REACT STRONGLY TO LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT ON REACHING FIRM UNDERSTANDING WITH AND BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN AND THUS WANT TO BE FULLY PREPARED FOR CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUE. ADVISE WHEN SUBSTANCE OF DEPARTMENT'S AND AID/GC'S POSITION

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 (ISO) W
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CAN BE CABLED.

7. COMMENTS: ON BASIS ABOVE DISCUSSIONS, IT APPEARS THAT WHILE GOJ HAS EASED ITS POSITION ON WEST BANK STUDY, IT HAS HARDENED ITS POSITION ON WATER AVAILABILITY/FLOW ISSUE WHICH WILL CLEARLY NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOI. OUR ASSESSMENT OF GOJ POSITION ON WATER AVAILABILITY/FLOW, I.E., 17 MCM NOW AND 8 MCM LATER -- IS THAT IT REPRESENTS A RESPONSE TO ISRAELI POSITION -- 25 MCM NOW AND 15 MCM LATER. EQUALLY, WE ALSO FEEL THAT GOJ IS CONCERNED ABOUT SYRIAN WATER USES IN UPPER YARMOUK REACHES AND THAT THUS DOES NOT WISH TO COMMIT FULL 25 MCM TO THE YARMOUK TRIANGLE FROM MAQARIN STAGE II. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAELIS DURING TAUBENBLATT'S FORTHCOMING VISIT, WE AGREE THAT IT DESIRABLE TO CONVEY NEW JORDANIAN POSITION ON WATER AVAILABILITY IN GENERAL TERMS AS NOTED ABOVE. TAUBENBLATT DOES NOT PLAN TO RAISE WEST BANK STUDY WITH ISRAELIS. BELIEVE BEST WAIT FOR GOJ REVIEW AND AGREEMENT TO NEW SCOPE OF WORK WHICH WILL BE PREPARED WHEN TAUBENBLATT

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RETURNS TO WASHINGTON.

8. EMBASSY HAS TOLD TAUBENBLATT ITS OPINION THAT THE WEST BANK WATER REQUIREMENTS STUDY SHOULD HAVE A SEPARATE IDENTITY FROM THE CONGRESSIONALLY STIMULATED PRM ON ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF PEACE. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE TWO STUDIES HAVE MANY COMMON FEATURES, THE WEST BANK WATER REQUIREMENTS STUDY, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD REMAIN UNDER AEGIS OF MAQARIN STEERING GROUP TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY IN ADAPTING IT TO REQUIREMENTS OF MAQARIN NEGOTIATIONS.

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Message Attributes

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